1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

The farmer's work in the gardens does not end with the "landing of the potatoes." Mangels and turnips and whatever grains he may grow must be planted, the soil prepared for them, and the growing crop weeded and tended. With the planting of the turnips, the last crop to be "put down," often as late as early June, his planting season is over.

With the return of warm weather and the drying off of the land, Irish summer begins. May is the first summer month. And by early May the bogs are dry enough to allow turf cutting to begin. The farmer must ordinarily find time between plantings to cut his year's supply of fuel and stack it into "reeks" to dry under the summer warmth. The turf cutting, though not connected with growing plants or animals, is an indispensable farm activity and takes its place among the never varying tasks of the agricultural round.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the fruits of the farmer's labor begin to appear. His first crop is cabbage which was planted in a small garden near the house at odd free times during the early spring. Cabbage is practically the only green vegetable of the small farm diet, and the old people remember "Hungry July" or July *an chabáiste* when a delayed potato crop might condemn them to a month or more of semistarvation in which cabbage was the only food. Today new varieties of potatoes have been introduced which mature as early as late June.

The mature potatoes mark no harvest. They are left in the ground to be turned out of the ridges with spade or plough as occasion for them demands. Not until late November will the last of them be dug up.

The first true harvest and the most important one of the year is the haymaking. The cutting of hay begins in late July or early August. It is not only the most important activity of the year, insuring a year-long supply of fodder for the farm animals and the income-producing cattle, but it is

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

137 counties, none of which has any settlement of 5,000 people. Irish peat, or turf as it is properly called, covers an area of some 3 million acres and has an average depth, in the central plain, of 19 feet. Shallower deposits are very extensive in the mountains, particularly along the western seaboard from Kerry round to Inishowen. Apart from their economic
● [372] importance—it is estimated that they form the sole fuel supply of two-thirds of the farming population (see Chapter 15)—the peats are of great interest to scientists, and during recent years an intensive investigation, under Danish leadership, has solved many problems concerning their origin and growth.

While bogs accumulate most readily in imperfectly drained lowlands, the heavy precipitation of the mountains is the main factor in their wide distribution. The south coast, with its excellent drainage, and the dry east coast, with the exception of the Wicklows, are largely peat-free. So are many areas of limestone which, with its cracks and joints, swallows the heaviest rains. And the eskers, though they may pond the drainage and thus cause water-logging and bog formation, are themselves free of peat. Regions favourable for human settlement are thus closely related to the distribution of peat, but the control is not merely negative since access to supplies of turf is often an important consideration.

For the scientist the value of turf-bogs lies in the fact that they preserve not only wood, twigs and the seeds and fruits of plants but even the minute grains of pollen, so that as they accumulate they write their own record, a record which the pollen-analyst can read. Moreover the phases of vegetation and climate thus chronicled can be correlated with the story of Irishmen who, careless or forgetful, have left behind at different levels objects of stone, metal or wood which the archæologist can use as clues in his detective work. In this way a sequence of climate, vegetation and human industries has been worked out, and we now have an outline of the whole story from the time when the first layers of lake clay were laid down in hollows of the surface while the ice still lingered in the mountain corries: they contain remains of arctic willow and the bones of the giant deer.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

352 bee-hive were common in some districts, but in parts of Mayo one rarely sees chairs of any kind. Step or ladder backed chairs with rush or straw seats are widespread: in the north-east chairs with wooden seats and upright-barred backs are [372] perhaps more usual. The turf fire is never allowed to go out: the glowing turves are heaped with ash at night and can be readily blown into a flame in the morning.

342 If the house has kept its brace and wattled chimney we shall be sitting under a canopy which tapers upwards to the smoke hole. The brace is a great beam extending from wall to wall, or resting at one end on a post some 5 feet out from the end-wall: between post and wall there may be a side partition or curtain-wall (Fig. 27) known in the Armagh-Meath area as the jamb-wall or the "hollan."[1] In some districts the front door is placed opposite this wall, but not, I fancy, in really old houses. In that case there may be a small window—the "spy-hole" "entry," or "jamb-window"—in the partition, allowing the sitter at the fireside to keep an eye on the open door. I have seen several houses in Co. Armagh where one has to stoop under the projecting brace to enter the house (Fig. 27). A further development is to hang a door on the brace-post, thus making a kind of internal porch or small hall. The jamb-wall is found from Co. Down to Co. Limerick but I have not seen it in the north-western province of the outshot.

342 The canopy is constructed of wattles or of sugán, plastered 352 with mud and cow-dung and white-washed outside. Canvas or boards are recent substitutes. At the sides of the chimney, above the ends of the brace, are small lofts or storeplaces, and there may be a larger "half-loft" over the other end of the kitchen—a relic of the time when corn and hay were kept here for feeding the animals below. A usual feature, under the stone seat to one side of the fire, is the ash or rubbish pit, another survival from far prehistory; and balancing it on the other side of the fire there may be a warm stone recess for the [231] sitting hen. At the back of the fire is a thick flag—the backstone—or a mass of clay forming the hob, but this is carefully built up of stones or bricks in eastern and southern

[1] This word is also used in N. England and Scotland for the curtain-wall. In Lancashire it is termed the "speer."

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 70 -- ANALYST]

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOG.

3|4 I have called this chapter " the Bog " rather than " Turf " because fuel is not the only product of the Irish turf bogs. The rough grazings once so important in mountain economy (Chapter 6) are commonly located on thin peat, while " buried treasure " is obtained in the form of bog-timber and also, it may be, in objects of wood or metal lost or deposited in the turf in ancient times. Measured by the time and labour of cutting, footing, stacking, and carrying, turf is an expensive fuel. At best, work in the bogs involves a constant struggle against water-logging underfoot and mists and rain overhead: at the worst there comes an occasional season wetter than usual when little or no turf can be won, and the bare countryside must be searched for sticks and rotting timber to burn. [237] In these circumstances dried cowdung is often used as fuel. [372] Moreover, the heavy drain upon all available hands comes in early summer, and the growing crops and livestock are liable to be neglected. " A great impediment to good husbandry," is the verdict of one writer.

The turf is cut in a normal year from the beginning of May onwards, or as soon as the potatoes and corn are in the ground, but the great thing is to begin as early as possible in [132] order to profit from the dry weather of spring. In districts where few crops are grown April, the driest month of the year, is the chosen time. A current of excitement runs through

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

planting his first potatoes on that day, when St. Patrick 796
" turned the warm side of the stone uppermost." In the 221
Antrim Glens the hay meadows are closed on St. Patrick's Day, and under the rundale system the animals which had run through the townland from Hallowe'en were now carefully herded or driven to the rough grazing grounds so that they could not trespass on the unfenced cropland. A little later come the many memories of seed-time ritual and the spring sacrifice now represented in Easter egg-rolling games.

The May festival ranked next in importance to that of November: these are the major turning points of the year, where Nature decks herself in fresh green or in " rich Autumn's golden quittance." On the first days of these months the cattle were numbered, and it is a commonplace that these are still the rent or " gale days " in Ireland. On May Day the young crops were visited with torches and the cattle blessed before being driven to the mountain booleys, and hill-top fires played a large part in the rites. These Beltane fires were originally [372] ●
need-fires, that is they were produced by the friction of two pieces of wood. All hearth fires were extinguished on May Eve, and re-lit from the sacred fire. It is still a common [177]
superstition that it is unlucky to give away fire, even as light for a pipe, on May Day, for that would be to give away your luck for the year. In Donegal it is considered unlucky to be the first house to show smoke on May morn: the cattle are milked and the byres cleaned before the fire is made up. The Beltane ritual included the eating of oatcakes " which must not touch iron," and dancing three times clockwise round the fire. Many volumes could be written on the customs and superstitions connected with this festival, touching fire and food, salt and butter, the rowan and the flowers of the field, especially the marsh-marigold or May-flower. The city urchins have turned the celebrations into a prolonged parading of May Queens and collecting of pennies. See Chapter 19.

It is probable that fires continue to be lit on May eve in 372
some parts. Certainly the mid-Summer festival which 221
follows on St. John's Eve (June 23rd) still keeps its hold, for 796
then fires will be seen blazing on hilltops in almost every Irish

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

372 796 221 county. Originally they were intended, it is thought, to keep the sun, now about to decline, on its course, but they also played a part in the blessing of crops and animals. In Donegal until lately a burning turf was flung into each patch of growing corn. These and the other relics recorded are of course, not peculiar to Ireland: they are part of the common heritage of the ancient civilization of Eurasia. There is evidence that this festival was important also in fishing communities. The inhabitants of the Galway Claddagh, for instance, marched through the town in procession on St. John's Eve, "gaily dressed and miming, to the accompaniment of music; they collected money for merrymaking from the townspeople, and spent the evening dancing, drinking, and lighting bonfires in their own quarters."

796 221 The Lammas festival is nowadays particularly associated with fairs, and the first of August, is referred to in Gaelic as "Lewy's Fair." But other traces of old custom survive. My colleague Dr. O'Brien tells me that in mid-Down, on the first Sunday in August, crowds of countryfolk assemble, accompanied by fiddlers, at the great prehistoric hill-top cairn on Slieve Croob. The "Criocan Thorn," in the heart of Slieve Bloom, is the scene of similar assemblies on the last Sunday in July. Here they dance to the pipes, and bilberries are eaten: the day is called "Fraochán (bilberry) Sunday."

So the year goes on its course to the culminating festival of All Hallows. We have touched on one of its former functions, the reunion of the family after the summer booleying, in Chapter 6. It is an occasion of reunion still: all Irish [574] folk like to be at home on this date, which is in some ways the most significant of the year, for it corresponds with what was once the New Year. Fires were lighted to mark the end of the [372] period of growth and to herald the new year. (In England the ceremonies have become assimilated to the Guy Fawkes celebrations on November 5th). As at Beltane, the Halloween fire used long ago to supply light to rekindle the domestic fire, which now serves as a substitute in the many games of divination played by the young at this time. Hazel-nuts, apples and other fruits of the autumn take an important place

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

241 sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone
[423] walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.

[417] The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be to some extent neglected. A family keeps a couple of pigs, some
[231] sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on
[237] Inishshark, where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de vâche*) are used as fuel.

373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

or the influence of the evil-eye; and that she had been told by some of the people that they had seen little men, dressed in green, and headed by two others dressed in black, running over the hills. 776 [854]

In a recent Paper,[1] Professor A. C. Haddon gives the following:—"In Innisbofin, Co. Galway, the people have a very firm belief in fairies. Mr. Allies, who resides there, informed me that one old man told him that he saw a number of fairy girls, dressed in brown, around him one day when he (Mr. Allies) was shooting rabbits. Mr. Allies offered £50 if a fairy could be shown to him, and £100 if he took a photograph of one. Mr. Allies has not yet paid away any money. Mr. Allies and his brother were quarrying a rock by the side of the harbour, and at last the men refused to work at it any longer, as it was so full of 'good people' as to be hot."

It is remarkable that the leprachaun does not appear in any of the fairy tales of these islands, though the fir dearg figures largely in them.

1. *Customs.*—The old customs kept up here are said not to be numerous. Wakes and funeral observances have been already referred to (p. 352). Beltane-fires are lighted on St. John's Eve, round which the people gather, and, when the fire becomes low, they leap through the smoke over the embers. 372 796

The custom of chasing the wren on St. Stephen's Day, so common throughout the greater part of Ireland, is said not to be known here. [184]

There are two holy wells on the islands, one, Tober Flannain, in the graveyard close to Tempull Colman, in the townland of Knock, is reputed to have worked many marvellous cures; and the other, Tober Leo, on Inishshark, not far from the cloghan of the saint, is also of great local fame. 312 778 755

For the following note on Inishshark, I am indebted to Mr. Michael Lavelle:— 172

"There is yet shown a ruin called Cloghan Leo, in which he (St. Leo) is said to have dwelt; also fourteen stations, to each of which on certain days these people make a holiday, and pray there for the day. There is also a blessed well, called Thobar Leo, at which they pray; and after praying during the day, they go and sleep in the place mentioned above (Cloghan Leo), but it is now almost to the ground. 778 778

"On one of the stations is a granite stone which is hollowed out

[1] "A Batch of Irish Folk-Lore." Professor A. C. Haddon. *Folk-Lore*, vol. iv., p. 49.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

241 The manures used are mainly sea-weed and farmyard manure. In the mountains the practice of burning the land is common.

The pasture is fairly good, but the cattle and sheep are inferior,
231 though efforts are now being made to improve the breeds.

An average family has a couple of pigs, a cow or two and some sheep, a large number of fowl, geese and ducks, and a donkey or horse.

372 The fuel used is turf obtained from the bogs, which are extensive, except in the southern part of the Mullet; and the islands which have now no turf of their own import from Achill or Ballycroy.

A very considerable quantity of kelp is made, on which, in the
381 Mullet, a royalty is charged by the landlord. About Portacloy there is no royalty paid.

Fishing employs many of the men, though until lately the fish
226 taken was merely for home use. The kinds usually caught are turbot, mackerel, ling, cod, and herrings; all of these, except the turbot, are now cured at the fishing stations established at several parts of the coast by the government. For home consumption, much
[251] is eaten fresh, but a good deal of it is roughly salted for winter use.

Lobsters are mostly taken by the men of Inishkea, and by a couple of boats at Portacloy. The Inishkea men, while at this
[342] fishing, mostly live in very primitive huts on Inisglora, where they stay away from their families for six weeks or two months at a time.
[435] The lobsters are sold in Belmullet for about five shillings per dozen, and are sent by car to Ballina and thence to England. The lobster pots are mostly of home manufacture.

The fishery stations mentioned above now afford employment to many who formerly had no means of disposing of their surplus time and fish.

439 Large quantities of eggs are exported from this district, Belmullet
235 being the largest egg exporting centre in Ireland. They are brought into the town by the country people and sold to dealers, who, when they have collected a sufficient quantity, send them on to Ballina, whence they are sent to England. Butter is also exported in the
[234] summer and autumn.

273 Illicit distilling is carried on to some extent in this district, though not at all so prevalent as formerly. The stills are made in the people's homes by travelling tinkers who live with the family until the job is finished.

286 A good deal of homespun is made, but the dyes are not obtained

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

775 bank by the roadside; after a time it rises, walks across the road to the mound, and then vanishes.

The ghost of Major —— is reported to be sometimes seen riding a phantom horse at a spot near Carn, and circles on the grass are pointed out as marking the scene of his equestrian feats; he is also said to ride at times to Bingham Castle.

776 There is a strong belief in fairies, and many people are to be found who say that they have seen them. They are said to dance at night and cause fairy rings; they dwell in grassy mounds and travel from place to place, using stems of the ragweed as horses.

[822] The mirage which is sometimes seen off the coast is ascribed to the fairies if it assumes the appearance of boats or ships; they are believed to have been seen to land on the shore, haul up their boats, and vanish. Many stories are told respecting the impudent pranks of these beings, and to their revenge for some injury, disease in man and cattle is sometimes ascribed. A man may become paralysed or waste away and die from fairy influence as well as from the evil eye, but their malice may have a less serious ending, and may only produce some disfigurement. Some time ago a man was one day walking homewards, when he saw lying on the road a bright new razor; he picked it up and took it home with him, but after shaving [828] with it got *sycosis menti*, and the implement was then declared to be a "fairy razor."

[775] Women dying in puerperal fever are believed to have been taken by the fairies to act as wet-nurses, and infants may be "taken away," and changelings put in their places. The changeling may be got rid of by putting on a roaring fire and throwing him behind it, when he [372] at once vanishes in the smoke. The *ignus fatuus* is believed to be caused by the fairies to lead people astray.

The attentions of these creatures are not expended on human beings alone, for they may revenge themselves on those who vex them by attacking domestic animals. Cattle becoming ill suddenly are supposed to be "shot" by the fairies, and the owners will often go to a great deal of trouble to find a person who possess a "fairy [823] stone," which is the only remedy. These stones are treasured very carefully and are kept wrapped up in a piece of cloth; they are used by rubbing them on the afflicted animal, and repeating a charm or prayer. Unfortunately no specimen of these stones was seen, so it cannot be stated positively whether they are flint arrow-heads or not.

A farm-house at a place called Illaunglass, in the Mullet, has a tale connected with it, illustrating the causing of disease in cattle by

[For information on peat deposits and their exploitation as a source of fuel, see category 314.]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Poverty and rack-renting undoubtedly contributed to the long survival of such conditions, but they ultimately derive from cultural forces of wide distribution and high antiquity. It used to be said in defence of the custom of sharing the house with the cow that she helped to keep the house warm and that in turn the cow yielded more milk. Inquire further and you will find that it was thought to be unlucky if the cow was not able to get a glimpse of the fire. Behind this belief there lies faith in the power of the fire to dispel evil spirits. The end of the house farthest from the hearth is commonly referred to as the 'bottom-end', a relic of the time when it housed the cattle, for it was obviously wise to have the floor sloping down towards the byre. Many cabins and huts were constructed as lean-tos against a bog-face or an old fence (ditch). Hence the saying applied, for example, to the Cappagh district of Co. Armagh, that 'you can't cross a ditch or you'll fall down a chimney'. It should be recalled that in Ireland the tenants built and repaired their own houses with, normally, no assistance from the landlord, and there was little inducement to build houses to last longer than the lease of say twenty-one years. Only in Ulster under the custom of tenant right could outgoing tenants claim recompense from the new tenants for improvements made.

The simple rectangular shape is a feature of west European house-types from prehistoric times and has characterized some houses of Neolithic age excavated in Ireland. Such houses were usually built of timber, clay or sods (scraws). Circular or oval houses are of similar antiquity, whether made of stone or of wattles, but although a few round-ended rectangular houses survive, the round hut of corbelled stone slabs is used today only as a store place or animal house (Chapter IX). The houses of Achill Island are described by several writers about 1840 as circular or oval in shape, built of boulders without mortar and having the thatched roof continuous with the walls. They had neither chimneys nor windows, and the single door was sometimes not more than four feet high. None of these houses is now inhabited though their ruins can be seen. The round or oval house, however, has probably contributed to certain features of the traditional rectangular-house in some areas, for example the central hearth and the hipped roof which is proper

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

V

HEARTH AND HOME

THE kitchen and the hearth are the very core of the Irish house, and the turf fire burning continuously day and night, throughout the year, is the symbol both of family continuity and of hospitality towards the stranger. When it goes out, it has been said, the soul goes out of the people of the house. The fire serves not only to prepare food and dry clothes, to bring warmth and comfort to the family and to ailing animals, but also to keep the thatch dry and preserve the roof timbers, so that 'when the smoke dies out of a house, it does soon be falling down'. This is one reason for the persistence of single-storey houses open to the roof, where the turf smoke could circulate among the rafters and keep the scraws and under-thatch dry. A 'smoke', in the seventeenth century inventories and to this day among country folk, means a house. In the days before chimneys were adopted the cabins were described as oozing smoke through the thatch so that they resembled 'reeking dunghills'. It should be remembered that the brick or stone chimney flue is a relative newcomer and, as we are constantly being reminded in these days of fuel shortage, a great waster of heat. The chimneyless open fire was much more effective as a house-warmer. The turf smoke, it is true, despite the draught-regulating mechanism of the double doors, must often have been troublesome, but as we shall see the furniture was designed to keep heads low.

Dry peat burns too quickly if the draught is strong, and the fire does best at floor level, glowing on a great stone slab or on a cobbled hearth set in the mud floor. The area immediately around the fire is also paved, but the rest of the old-style

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

354 washed jambs of a stone chimney (Fig. 19) the simple wrought-iron crane has the simple beauty of fitness to purpose which most hand-made things possess. The smith rarely attempted the decorative scrolls which were more suited to light objects such as oatcake toasters. From the cranes must hang the mighty iron pots, some with a capacity of 25 gallons, to hold food for man and beast. One hears of examples which were [406] literally 'cranes', fitted with a windlass and chain to lift pots on and off the fire. Such capacious vessels could not have come into use had the fire not been at floor level.

The adjustable pot-hanger which hooks on to the arm of the crane is a simple but effective device for adjusting the height of the hanging pot (Fig. 20). Like so many of the culture-elements we are describing in this book, it apparently belongs to the Atlantic fringes of Europe. While it could be a medieval or later introduction to Ireland, research may show that it is a Celtic trait (fire-irons are a ritual feature of early Celtic cultures) which has found its last refuge in the open hearths of the west. The crane and other fire-irons and the very soot that [372] clings to them have been regarded with superstitious reverence by virtue of their association with fire. Soot carried in the pocket, [484] for example, gave protection on a journey. More ancient in origin than the crane is the hanging chain suspended from a crook-stick and terminating in a movable pot-hook (crook). From existing examples one could work out a plausible evolutionary sequence of hangings from the roof-suspension which can still be seen in the black-houses of the Hebrides. The sequence begins with a wooden peg stuck high in the back wall of the fire, giving way to a transverse bar set parallel to the wall in the smoke canopy, which might in turn become the arm of the crane. These crook-sticks are said to have been made of holly. The long chain of the first example certainly gives more 'play' than the short suspension from a chimney bar, but the peg is more inaccessible and this supports the contention that it is a survival of the long hanging from the roof-timbers over a chimneyless central hearth.

Pots and pans and other hearth-gear we shall discuss in the next chapter, but here we should notice some further architectural fittings of the partitioned fireside. On one side of the

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

quartzites. The bed-wing gives a narrow room additional width where it is most needed, near the fire. It may be that sufficiently long timbers for sizeable rafters were not easily procured in these mountain regions of poor soil. We may be dealing, however, with a feature which has died out in other regions and which has lived on in difficult country. The built-in wall-bed—the half-neuk—is known in the Orkneys, the Faroes and in the Hebridean black-houses and is characteristic of humble societies in other parts of the world. It is possible that in Ireland the wall-bed attests contacts with western Scotland which have repeatedly influenced that part of the country running south-westwards from Co. Antrim following the 'Caledonian grain' to Connacht. In any case the wall-bed appears to be restricted to the extreme north-western fringes of Europe.

The open hearth with all its associations is truly the heart and centre of house and home. The fire is, with her children, the 'care' of the woman of the house. 'A woman can never go to the fire', runs an Irish saying, 'without tampering with it.' The manifold duties of the housewife keep her moving about the hearth, tethered to it for most of the day. Her last duty at night is to 'smoor' it, burying a live turf in the ashes to retain a spark which can be fanned into a blaze next morning. This custom was fortified by the belief that the good folk, the fairies, would be displeased if there were no fire for them through the night. I have sat at fires which, it was claimed, had not been allowed to go out for over a century, or for as far back as family memory could go. It is to the fireside seat that the visitor is invited, for this is the place of honour, and it is around the fire that tales of old time are told. The magic of the open fire, playing upon the fancies of generations who have gathered round it, has engendered a host of beliefs and portents. The fire can give warning of wind and weather, of lucky and unlucky visitors, of marriage and death. Above all, it is a shrine to which ancestral spirits return, a link with the living past.[1]

[1]Since this chapter was written A. T. Lucas has published (in *Arctica*, 11, 16–35) an account of Wattle and Straw Mat Doors in Ireland. See page 65.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

of water. I was told on Rathlin Island that eligible girls would take a sweating bath to clear their complexions before the annual visit to the Lammas Fair at Ballycastle on the mainland. They were in demand also during kelp-burning operations—a notoriously filthy occupation. Not all sweat-houses were built of stone. Wood-Martin quotes accounts of some which were dug into an earth bank and 'finished with sods', while others were excavated in turf banks.[1] He also records that water was sometimes poured on stones inside the sweat-house, 'thus converting it into a vapour- as well as a sweat-bath'.[2]

More intimately linked with the house is the turf-shelter, the Irish equivalent of the English coal-shed. In the drier eastern part of the country a built shelter is not necessary, and the peats, skilfully built into a huge turf-stack protected from the driving rains by a wall or gable, perhaps improve by exposure to the winds, but in the wetter west unless the turf is under cover it must be dried in small quantities in the loft or by the fire before burning. In parts of Kerry the turf is stored in large clochauns: elsewhere narrow oblong or oval stone enclosures are erected, their walls loosely built to allow the wind to blow through. The peat-store or cleit of St. Kilda was similar—an oblong corbelled stone building with open joints.

The well is another essential item of equipment of farm or clachan, and it is often provided with a corbelled stone cover. Since springs are abundant, except in bare limestone country, the wells are not deep and few are fitted with windlasses. In their absence quite elaborate ramps with stone steps are sometimes needed to obtain access to the water, and the whole structure being roofed, some examples (for instance in the south-east of Co. Down) are considerable architectural feats (Fig. 40). In the limestone districts the woman of the house may have to walk as much as half a mile to carry drinking water from a dip-well. It is now carried in buckets but was formerly transported in stave-built piggins balanced on the head. The peasant makes a virtue of necessity by asserting that almost every spring well yields 'the finest water in all Ireland, and never runs dry'. Wells are regarded as chancy things, not to be

[1] Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, II (1902), 166.
[2] Ibid., 165.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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XIV

TURF AND SLANE

IT should perhaps be explained that this chapter has nothing to do with horses, for the word *turf* in Ireland keeps its old meaning—as in German *torf* and French *tourbe*—and is the equivalent of the English word *peat*. Only in the extreme north-east of the country, in districts settled by Scots planters, does one hear turves cut from the bog referred to as peats. The cutting-spade, a highly specialized tool, is known as a turf-spade or sleán, a Gaelic word which may be anglicized as slane.

Moving about the Irish countryside one is never long out of sight or scent of turf. The scent arises not from the bogs themselves, which for all their accumulated decay are free of the odours of putrifaction, but from the surprisingly sweet smell of burning turf which announces their proximity. For the returning exile nothing so surely tugs at the trigger of memory: the faintest whiff of turf smoke hanging in the damp air is enough to recall the whole scene, the glowing fire on the hearth, the half-light of the kitchen, the great turf stack at the gable and all the toil that went to its making. And in the background is the bog itself, save at the cutting season a quiet empty place, holding a stillness which deepens when the curlew's cry fades away or the startled pipit drops back into the heather. Green and gold in spring, it beckons with waving bog-cotton in summer and glows with reds and russets as of a great peat fire in autumn. These are scents and scenes not readily forgotten.

The use of turf as fuel is nowadays an index of isolation and economic self-sufficiency. Mechanical excavation of fuel for power plants is being successfully applied by Bord na Mona (the Irish Turf Board) but for domestic fuel nothing can replace

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the costly hand-cutting, -wheeling, and -turning. The calorific value of peat is less than half that of coal, and its bulk makes transport costs high. Small coal-boats put in at harbours all round the coast, and in the larger towns, whose adjacent supplies were early exhausted, coal has been the chief fuel since the days when Dean Swift vainly advised the Irish to burn everything English except their coal. During the second world war, however, even Dublin had to depend on turf brought from the west and stacked in immense piles in Phoenix Park. Some peat is still burnt in the towns, especially in the interior of the country, but it is in the small farms that the bulk of the annual turf harvest is consumed. So necessary was a supply of peat in former times that proximity to a turf bog was a factor in land values. As to the antiquity of its use as fuel in Ireland we have little evidence, though Pliny describes its preparation in ancient Germany. Petty tells us in the second half of the seventeenth century that 'their fuel is turf in most places',[1] although Professor O'Brien, writing of the same century states that 'until the woods began to sink to very small proportions, turf was not at all employed for heating.'[2] The difficulty is that such a lowly pursuit as peat-cutting is not likely to be mentioned in the Irish law texts, and if we rely on documentary evidence alone we might suppose that all sorts of ancient practices were introduced by the English who first described them. To judge from the bright red ashes one frequently sees in the excavated hearths of Dark Age habitations peat was used as firing before history begins in upland areas and along the wind-swept coasts. But we may accept the view that over most of the country turf-cutting on its historic scale developed, probably under the stimulus of improved techniques brought in by English settlers, after the major forest clearances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is evidence from some parts of the country, for the eighteenth century, that the cutting of peat for winter use was one of the occupations of transhumant herders who took their livestock to the bog pastures in summer.[3] But it is unreasonable to suppose that the great labour involved

[1] Sir W. Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (1691), 82.
[2] G. O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century*, 44.
[3] W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down*, 125.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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would have been undertaken so long as supplies of timber were available, though Petty observed that 'the cutting and carriage of turf was easier than that of wood.'[1] We may think of turf as supplementing and then coming to replace wood fuel, though in fact some wood is still very desirable to supplement the slow-burning turf, especially the quick-burning gorse and bog-fir which are the most readily available sources in treeless areas.

It is calculated that at least one fifth of the country is coated with bog, but a small proportion of this could be classed as reclaimed bog. It occurs not only in all the mountain areas but also, and more conspicuously, in the ill-drained hollows of the lowlands where glacial deposits had blocked the natural flow of waters or human occupation had brought about environmental changes. It is estimated that in recent years over 5 million tons of dried domestic fuel have been cut annually, representing a weight as cut of some 40 million tons. At this rate the supply is reckoned to last for 500 years, but this makes no allowance for the increasing exploitation of peat for the thermal generation of electricity and for the extraction of by-products. There is, however, a slow accretion of peat in many areas, though this consists mostly of sphagnum peat and the good-quality fen and forest peats of the deeper bogs are not being replaced. In fact these deeper layers tend to remain untapped either because the water cannot be drained away, or because layers of tree-stumps defy the attacks of both spade and mechanical digger.

The main causative factor in bog-formation is waterlogged soil, which checks the decomposition of vegetable remains. It therefore depends to a considerable extent on climate and on the balance between precipitation and evaporation. It is generally held that past phases of bog-growth can be correlated with periods of climatic deterioration, and horizons which are believed to mark the changed conditions can be traced in most of the deep bogs. In Scandinavia the most important of such 'recurrence horizons' has been dated by pollen-analysts and archaeologists to about 400 B.C.: the stormy sub-Atlantic climate whose beginning is thus chronicled is believed to have improved somewhat early in the Christian era, but to have suffered two further periods of worsening about A.D. 400 and

[1] Sir W. Petty, op. cit., 82.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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137 314 farmers, both the flowers of the fields and the shrubs of the forest edge, took on a special significance which they have retained in the peasant mind to the present day. There is powerful magic in the flowers of May, in the hazel twig, the fairy birch, the rowan branch and above all in the flowering hawthorn. This most beautiful of trees first became common in the Neolithic period. In a later chapter we shall consider some of the enduring spiritual aspects of man's association with this environment of his own making. At about this time, too, when the Neolithic economy was both absorbing the older population and being supplemented by metal tools, pollen studies reveal a marked decline of the elm tree which has been explained by the use of its bark and branches as cattle fodder. The oak forests, however, persisted in strength, and were presumably treasured for their supply of pig-fattening mast. Alder also was abundant, occupying soils which were too damp to be cultivated.

The onset of the sub-Atlantic climatic deterioration in the last millennium B.C. seems to have accelerated the peat-forming processes. Both oak and elm decline, but the birch tree spreads widely. In County Antrim, for instance, extensive oak forests growing up to heights of 1,000 feet were overwhelmed in the spreading bogs. The pine had become rare by the end of prehistoric times, though it may have lingered into the historic period on sandy eskers and on the dried surfaces of some of the raised bogs. Despite climatic change and human interference, considerable oak and alder forests survived here and there into the seventeenth century, but these last remnants of the Irish forests were almost all destroyed by the military and economic demands of that troubled century. Among the many consequences was the almost universal exploitation of the peat bogs for fuel. In addition great quantities of turf were consumed by the linen bleachers from the late eighteenth century, and kilns for burning lime and bricks and for drying agricultural produce made considerable demands on the bogs. A minor traditional [372] use which may be mentioned in passing was for the preparation of charcoal for smith's work. The peat was charred in pits.

314 786 For all its toil turf-cutting provides a welcome break from the routine of farmwork, a time when friends and neighbours come together away from the familiar surroundings of fields

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time: his finger marks can still be seen when the dried turves are burning in the fire. In deep bogs the lifter may use a long-handled fork (Fig. 66, 2) or shovel, pitching the turves for the barrowman to load. A barrow load is anything from ten to twenty peats. Apparently crude and artless, the turf barrow is well designed for its purpose, and it shows many adaptations to local conditions and traditions (Fig. 63). It is slatted for lightness and is made almost entirely of wood, yet it must be strong enough to take heavy loads over rough ground: it should be low and flat for convenience in loading and unloading, yet it needs a large broad wheel for pushing over an uneven surface. Legs may be dispensed with, reduced to lugs or swept back to serve as runners. Again the shape of the handles and the slope of the front board depend on the method of loading and tipping, over the side or over the front. Every detail of the design is in answer to a general or local problem. If the ground is very rough or soft the barrow must be pulled, not pushed, and in extreme cases its place is taken by a slipe. In Antrim alone there are several varieties of turf slipe. All are slatted lengthwise—because the peats are loaded transversely—and are fitted with short corner posts and tipping handles. An interesting variant—the roller slipe—has been recorded but is no longer seen: it had two rollers fitted under the body of the sledge.[1] The dried peats also may be transported, if the bog is soft, on a slipe (Fig. 58, 5) or in a carrying basket (Fig. 57).

Despite ingenious shifts towards greater speed the spreading and drying of turf are inefficient because of the time taken in wheeling and handling and the great difficulty of drying turf which is spread on almost saturated surfaces. In exceptionally wet summers the peats do not dry out, and tragedy may follow if the winter is severe. It is then that the countryside is stripped of what little timber it can provide, and before coal was obtainable anything from furniture to fishbones and cowdung was utilized to boil the pot. In bogless districts dung was quite regularly used: there are several accounts of it in travel records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed in the treeless islands dung was until recently carefully harvested, gathered in piles in the fields in spring, and sometimes worked with the

[1] E. E. Evans in *Aspects of Archaeology* (Ed. W. F. Grimes), plate 2A.

 [Text continues on p. 194]

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392 hands into cakes and piled against a wall until dry enough to 237 carry home.[1]

After lying spread on the ground for a week or two the turves 314 are footed, that is a dozen or so are put to lean together in the shape of a pitched roof, to catch the wind (Fig. 64). This is [462] work for women and for children, who are, in some districts, [857] given a week's holiday from school. Through the months of June and July and often into August there is constant coming and going as the peats are turned and built into larger and larger piles, turn-foots, castles, rickles, lumps and clamps—the names and the shapes show considerable regional variation—until they can be ricked or stacked on the bog ready to be carried to the farms as opportunity offers. The wind is the main drying agent, and once dried the peats acquire a waterproof skin. A well-built stack will throw off the rain, but it is usual in the west to thatch with rushes and add a coping of sods or [343] stones against the wind. Open-sided turfsheds specially built of wood or stone are the exception rather than the rule. A favourite place for the stack is against the house gable, where it provides a protective warmth even before the turf is burnt. The fuel is taken into the house in baskets, creels or wights, and a small supply is kept handy by the fireside or stored, as in the Aran Islands, on the kitchen loft (Pl. 9, 2).

FIG. 64. Stages in the drying and stacking of turf (not to scale; the stack, right, is about 9 feet high).

Some lowland bogs are too waterlogged to be cut into turves, and if no slane-turf is available the black turf-mud is moulded by hand into bricks or balls which are stacked to dry. In some counties, for instance Meath and Cavan, mud turf is highly prized and its preparation follows a well-ordered routine. After

[1]C. R. Browne and A. C. Haddon, *The Aran Islands*.

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the belief that it contained the essence of the flowers of the fields. Sprigs of rowan were stuck in the midden, placed over the door of the byre and hung on the cows' horns. Flowers were also put around the well, for it was supposed that a milk-thief could steal your summer's milk and butter by skimming the water at this time, or by dragging a rope across a field to collect the dew. Boundary streams were also potent in this connexion, and I was told in Donegal that the milk churn had to be washed on May Day in 'three landlords' waters', that is the meeting place of three properties.

Besides these family rites there were public ceremonies, the lighting of bonfires and parades of May Babies, of May Boys and the May Queen. One of the rhymes sung by May Boys in the west of Ireland runs, in translation:

> Summer! Summer! the milk of the heifers,
> And ourselves brought the summer with us,
> The yellow summer, and the white daisy,
> And ourselves brought the summer with us.[1]

The May Baby parades link the festival with the fertility of the family as well as the fields. I give an account of the ceremonies as described in Co. Louth in the early nineteenth century: 'On May Day, the figure of a female is made up, fixed upon a short pole and dressed in a fantastic manner, with flowers, ribbons, etc. This figure they call 'The May Baby' . . . Around this figure a man and woman (generally his wife) of the humble class, dressed also fantastically with straw, etc., dance to the sound of a fiddle and entertain the people with indecent shows and postures . . . These exhibitions cause great merriment among the assembled populace; women who have had no children to their husbands also attend to see this figure and performance, which they imagine will promote fruitfulness in them, and cause them to have children.'[2]

The May Day bonfires and the May Queens are now little more than children's games and excuses for begging. The burning of bones—whence the word bonfire, which in Ireland keeps its original pronunciation—and in particular of horses'

[1] Lady Wilde, *The Dublin University Magazine* (1849), 541–60.
[2] J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews in 1838*, 70.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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527 bones, were formerly considered proper to the occasion. There
● [372] were dances round the fires, performed with great dexterity and precision by youths armed with cudgels. The May-pole,
[177] however, and the May-bush observances seem to go with areas
[824] of strong English influence and do not seem to have been generally adopted by the Irish, perhaps because May-trees, which are not given this name in Ireland, are likely to be fairy thorns and therefore should not be damaged. The May Eve assemblies are thus described in eighteenth century Kilkenny: 'Bloody battles and much confusion and uproar is the mischief that follows from the barbarous and unheeded custom of collecting *May-balls* among the new-married folks . . . The hedges and fences, in the outlets of our city, are stripped of full-grown hawthorns, whose late blooming pride and fragrancy is now miserably dying away on dunghills before cabin doors, by way of *May-bushes*, no longer, alas! to afford a nuptial bed to the new-married linnet and his mate, but fastened in the ground for the vilest purpose—to hang filthy clouts upon'.[1] The gold and white balls which were hung on maypoles have been regarded as symbols of sun and moon—or it may be of butter and milk. Another May Day custom was the licence allowed
[786] young boys to run about stinging people with nettles, a privilege which in my youth in Shropshire was permitted only on 29th May, the victims being those who did not wear an oak-apple.

527 If the May Day fires are now more in evidence in the back streets of Belfast than on the high hills, the Midsummer fires still burn
372 strongly in some country districts and their pagan flames have not been so easily quenched. I saw dozens of them in Co. Galway on Midsummer Eve in 1956, mostly at country cross-roads. Old men in Donegal have told me that they remembered the time when they had counted from their hilltop fire nearly a hundred others. Young men would show their mettle by jumping to and fro through the flames, and girls by doing so hoped to marry early and have many children. We recall that
[789] leaping is in folk tradition a widely approved method of making the crops grow high, and the fires, it is conjectured, were meant to encourage the sun, now at its turning point, to shine on through the harvest. Midsummer was a time when evil influ-

[1] *Finn's Leinster Journal* (4th May, 1768).

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ences affecting human beings and the animals and crops were usually potent. It is remembered that 'the oldest woman in the town' would go round the fire three times on her knees, reciting prayers. To walk three times sunwise round the fire was to ensure a year without sickness, and as the flames died down the cattle were driven through the embers and their backs were singed with a lighted hazel wand: the sticks were preserved and utilized for driving the cows. By tradition everyone carried home a burning stick from the fire, and whoever was first to take it into the house brought the good luck of the year with him. A glowing turf from the fire was carried three times sunwise round the dwelling house, and others were thrown into the growing crops. Yarrow was hung in the house to ward off illness. Fernseed was gathered for its magic powers and divinations made from the roots of bracken and lilies. We have already noticed the custom of retaining some of the ashes from the Midsummer fires to mix with the following season's seed corn.

The third fire-festival of the year is associated with St. Peter's Eve on 28th June, but I have not come across many traditions of St. Peter's bonfires except in Armagh and Wexford: it may thus be mainly restricted to areas where English influence was strong. More widespread and better known, because they have been caught up in many patterns and in such popular pilgrimages as that to Croagh Patrick, are the celebrations of Lammas, originally 1st August, now held on Lammas Sunday, the last in July, which is also known as Garland, Bilberry or Height Sunday. This marked the end of summer and the beginning of harvest: it was a first-fruits festival into which the alien potato has been fitted, and no potatoes were dug before this time. Offerings of flowers and fruits were made at holy wells, and in some places cattle were made to swim through streams and loughs into which lumps of fresh butter had been cast:[1] 'They think no beast will live the whole year through unless they be thus drenched'.[2] In hilly districts Height Sunday is observed by climbing to a recognized picnic place where bilberries are gathered and games and dancing were formerly enjoyed. In Co. Down a large prehistoric

[1]Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, 1, 282.
[2]Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 121.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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527 cairn on the summit of Slieve Croob was until recent years the
● 372 scene of a great gathering on the first Sunday in August. The fiddling and dancing are no more, though numbers of young people still assemble there and frolic in the heather. Blaeberries (bilberries) were picked into little rush baskets made on the spot (Fig. 70) and that the occasion was recognized as a
[584] legitimate time of courting is shown by the comment that 'many a lad met his wife on Blaeberry Sunday'. The name Garland Sunday derives from the hoops decorated with ribbons and flowers which were made by unmarried girls and, latterly, carried to church before being set up in the graveyard to preside over the dancing with which the day terminated. Rites in
[769] honour of the dead seem to have marked the old Lammas festival, so that again we notice the association of ancestral spirits with the fertility of farm and family.

527 By St. Bartholomew's Day, 24th August, harvest is well under way and the first-saved corn is ready to be thrashed. By tradition the flails were made ready on this day, and if the high harvest winds are blowing it is said that the saint is testing his flails. Next comes Michaelmas, 29th September, linked closely with the sea, with horses, and, strangely, with the ceremony of killing a cock or a goose, originally as a sacrifice in honour of the saint. In some parts Michaelmas was regarded as one of the most important feasts of the year, but I have not found any districts where it was, as in Uist, 'much the most imposing pageant and most popular demonstration of the Celtic year': nor have I come across any tradition of the rites of digging up and making presents of wild carrots which was associated, in the Hebrides, with the eating of cakes made of mixed flour baked before a stone flag, with the killing of a lamb, visits to graveyards, and a night of 'dance, song and love-making'.[1]

527 Throughout Ireland these lesser feast days pale in comparison
769 with the culminating festival which marks the end of the dying year on All-Hallows Eve. An astonishing amount of lore still clings to Hallowe'en, and we must restrict ourselves to picking out some of the main elements of this crowded occasion. The crops should now be all gathered in and no fruit should be picked

[1] A. Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, I (1928), 198.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

many of them have lost their lives to the ocean. Islanders are well aware of the wide differences in rowing and fishing abilities among themselves, and the evaluation of the skills of various men, past and present, is a much heard subject of conversation. Also, many men choose not to fish because they are unable to develop the requisite talents, are prone to severe seasickness, or are overly wary of the dangers associated with fishing. It seems reasonable to assume that people who spend so much time on the water as a matter of safety will have learned to swim, but I was unable to discover a single islander who possesses this skill. The reasons put forward to account for the fact are several, but the most significant one never is broached—the puritanical reluctance to bare the body either publicly or privately at any age. Folk rationalizations are best summed up in the following quotations: "Nothing will happen to the man who knows the sea.", "Better for a man to drown at once and save himself the suffering.", "The man who can't swim will take more care.", and "When death is on a man, he can't be saved."

A recurring motif in writings about Inis Beag is the threatening sea and heavy loss of life among fishermen, with its attendant psychological depression. In the past century, only four sea accidents have occurred in the island with the loss of but 12 lives. The folk are extremely cautious out of respect for the elements, handle their canoes with remarkable dexterity, and are excellent weather forecasters. The claim of one famous writer that each family has lost male members to the ocean reflects not only his psychological outlook, but the breadth and depth of kinship reckoning and the high degree of inbreeding—as an islander told me, "Every Inis Beag family is related, and the drowned man might have been eight-of-kin (third cousin) who died 60 years ago." The motif can be attributed to the projection of a tragic world view into the interpretation of the local culture by some authors, to the nativistic and primitivistic biases of other writers, and to a common sense conclusion reached by observers who have spent little time in the island and have failed to "count noses."

Diet

The diet of the islanders is simple, and only one large meal is eaten during the day. After the turf fire is rekindled from coals and water is boiled for tea, the family assembles for a breakfast which includes bread spread with butter and jam and tea mixed with ample amounts of milk and sugar. Dinner at noon and lunches in the late afternoon and before retiring at night feature the same ingredients, although a boiled or fried egg usually is added to the dinner menu. The supper, eaten between seven and eight o'clock in the summer and an hour or two earlier during the winter, is the main meal when the family once again is united, and at this time boiled potatoes and vegetables, and meat if available, dominate the menu. Again bread and tea are served, and a dessert, or "sweet"—such as custard, rhubarb, blancmange, or biscuits—may be added. Children of school age in a family eat together at noon and after school and may be joined by their father, but his duties often absent him from one or both of these meals, and he may carry bread and tea

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

582 621 593 three sisters, and ten of two—and they tend to visit together often and lend mutual economic and emotional support.

591 428 342 822 776 When a man marries, his parents relinquish the holding, and its direction passes into the hands of the newlyweds. Arensberg and Kimball talk of the "west room" complex, which may exist in many parts of peasant Ireland but does not in Inis Beag. Houses in north and west Co. Clare "with remarkable uniformity" are aligned east and west, and on the son's marriage the old couple moves into the westernmost room "behind the hearth." This room is linked with the Celtic supernatural, for fairy paths are thought to be located along the western side of many houses, and the pagan afterworld—the Isle of the Blest—is a sunken land mass in the nearby western sea (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:134–136). In Inis Beag, on the contrary, over one-third of the domiciles since 1841 have been aligned north and south, fairy trails are found mostly at the back of the island, and a retiring couple may choose any of three rooms (or more in modern homes) to move into. The west room of Co. Clare is called simply "the room" in Inis Beag.

342 [178] [177] [65] Thirty-four of the 71 inhabited buildings in the island have thatched roofs (see Fig. 8), while the others are antiquated houses which lately have been renovated, mainly by replacing thatch with slate, or are newly built. The last of the traditional "cabins" or "cottages" were constructed in the 1930s, and the first of the modern ones during the 1890s—with two stories initially, and styled and subsidized by the Congested Districts Board. Old and renovated houses are rectangular in shape, are constructed of whitewashed stones with concrete floors, and have a large central kitchen with doors or half-doors to the outside both front and back. "The room" is beyond the kitchen at one end of the building, and two bedrooms (one in the most ancient cabins) are at the other. Lofts for sleeping are in the gable of the roof above "the room" and bedrooms, and are entered by ladder [372] or staircase from the kitchen. Fireplaces share a common wall and chimney between the kitchen and "the room," as they also may between the two bedrooms; but the kitchen hearth is the most used, and in some homes is not permitted to die out.

351 [343] [244] The space between the cottage and the low stone wall and outbuildings surrounding it is called the "street." Outbuildings at the back include a toilet and various storage sheds—for spuds and turf sods in particular, although the latter often are stacked instead against a gable of the cabin. In a portion of the street or a small field beyond the wall, a garden for vegetables is maintained for easy access.

342 The kitchen doors of the house sometimes open into small halls in the front or back, or both, and when the weather is not too cold or blustery, the door opening [262] [264] [415] [118] [352] to the street on the windward side is kept closed and its opposite open. In the kitchen, which is the center of family activities, are: the fireplace at which cooking is done with pot and cooking ovens hung from an iron hook; the table around which the family eats their five daily meals; the sideboard, known as a "dresser," filled with "delph"—both everyday and "best" china; the religious shrine with "blessed lamp" surrounded by religious pictures and sacred objects; and, occasionally, a "settlebed" which, when closed, serves as a bench during the daytime.

354 [362] [616] [595] [178] The hearth in the kitchen is indented into the wall to provide two hobs, or seats, and on a chilly or dampish day the folk will nestle inside the fireplace and sit tightly together on a bench drawn up close to the turf fire for warmth. This

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish

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[759
[155] bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

158 It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health" reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria.
751 In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with
[291] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear
[834] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism
[753] and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

514 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evac-
827 uation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and
[863] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that ha-
[825] bitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.
Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at
[562] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting
[273] the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most
[241] carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed
237 feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the main-
• 372 land, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is
514 burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another
283 custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the
[462] secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

* 831 Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are
522 the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood
[154] by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore
[123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is